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ABSTRACT

The speech classes in leadership training described in this paper consist of laboratory groups that give experiential training in interpersonal communication skills. These groups, comprised of students, faculty, administrators, and staff and community members, function under the direction of student facilitators who are intensively trained in the leadership class and who are supervised by instructors and tutors. The paper describes the process involved in the leadership class as follows: first, there is laboratory training for the students; then, the students become facilitators and process observers; finally, after passing a competency-based test, these students become part of a leadership team for a group. In conclusion, the paper describes a model program that has operated with 200 students per semester for seven years and examines the research that has been conducted on the model. (Author/MAI)

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SERVING THOSE SEEKING PERSONAL GROWTH: A RATIONALE AND MODEL FOR LEADERSHIP TRAINING AND LABORATORY GROUPS IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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Growing demands for education relevant to dealing with real life experiences and personal growth seem to have converged in recent years with a rapidly increasing awareness within the academic community of limited resources. Because the community colleges have a special mission of service to the people of their local communities, the question of how to meet increased demands for personal growth education in an era of tightening budgets is especially pertinent. Teachers of interpersonal communication face a special need for new strategies of learning as they witness their class size grow by half again or even double. The struggle to maintain a personalness, to offer individual attention, to afford the opportunity for each student to verbally participate in a viable manner becomes acute as class sizes reach thirty or forty or more. Yet we are admonished to provide a forum in which each student can "learn about, experience, and modify his interpersonal communication skills."[1] Given the circumstances, and the desirability of maintaining experiential learning, it is clear that new learning strategies must be explored. Much available data and literature suggests that use of small groups can be an effective learning tool for a variety of reasons including synergy, economy of time, reduced threat and a realistic experiential setting to learn about and work on skills.[2]

Our own experience suggests that when demand is high for courses in human relations skills, such as interpersonal communication or assertive training, it often cannot be met within the confines of a one semester or one quarter course, even when that course utilizes a small group and activities-based approach. The amount of theory to digest and the amount of experiential learning necessary to satisfy the task of removing interpersonal incompetence fostered and supported by the society suggests that the task may only be initiated in a basic course that purports to provide an overview of interpersonal communication.

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[1]Arthur P. Bochner and Clifford W. Kelly, "Interpersonal Competence: Rationale, Philosophy, And Implementation Of A Conceptual Framework," The Speech Teacher, 23, 4 (November 1974), 279.

We are challenged then to come up with courses that provide a follow through to the basic course, and satisfy the charge to devote ourselves to the removal of interpersonal incompetence.[3] We have experimented with two paths in this direction: offering a variety of courses that each focus on one aspect of the basic course (e.g. general semantics, group discussion, and nonverbal communication), and offering courses that attempt a broader personal growth focus (interaction analysis and group leadership; the former course having a small enrollment and adaptable to the framework Bochner and Kelly propose, and the latter course having a larger enrollment and through connection to a college-sponsored program of laboratory groups, reaching a large population).[4] Given the demand for personal growth courses from both students and community members (and faculty, administrators, and staff), it would be preferable to design a course that somehow reaches large numbers of people, and yet remains effective to its mission of attacking interpersonal incompetence and substituting this with interpersonal competence.

If we combine a student teaching assistant program with an interpersonal communication laboratory model, the result may yield a method for offering a second-level course with a cognitive and experiential mix that would be available to large numbers of persons and still maintain quality. Book discusses a group facilitator (TA) program's advantages and points to knowledge that facilitators-in-training should receive; the program is successful on the high school level, and facilitators are used in conjunction with small discussion groups.[5] The variation proposed here, which is to utilize group facilitators in laboratory groups, would necessitate more intensive training for the facilitators due to the personal and interpersonal nature of the laboratory group's focus. However, this type of group can be one of the most productive and powerful learning environments for interpersonal skills and personal growth. When combining elements of T-group methodology and encounter methodology, laboratory groups provide compelling experience, opportunity for experimentation with communication behaviors, skills of observation and benefits of feedback, and cognitive understanding. This is, of course, viable only with an adequate training

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[2]Cassandra L. Book, "Student Leadership: Improvement Through Communication Skills," Communication Education, 26, 3 (September 1977), 237.

[3]Bochner and Kelly, pp. 285-286.

[4]The latter course is also adaptable to the framework Bochner and Kelly propose.

program.

When preparing student facilitators to lead laboratory groups, a group leadership course meets several needs at once. Students enrolled in the group leadership course engage in an intense program of continuing the skills development begun in the basic course, for many of the skills required for facilitation parallel skills presented in most basic courses (feedback, descriptiveness, self-disclosure, empathic communication, and more) in interpersonal communication. In addition these students learn new skills of team-work, helping and directing, for example. Through preparing to work with and help others learn and grow, they learn more about themselves. Further, an entirely new population, members of the academic community not involved in formal speech courses and members of the larger community beyond the college have an opportunity to participate in laboratory groups without having to become involved in a formal, graded course. The laboratory groups at our institution have been constituted as adult education courses that are ungraded and have zero unit value; thus, a community member or member of the academic community concerned with personal growth and developing communication skills can enroll without getting involved at a level beyond their desire (grades, tests, competition, concern for units).

The demand for such programs exists in most urban and suburban areas. In the last decade there has been a proliferation of all kinds of groups, both reputable and disreputable. The demand in our area is so great that since our program's inception seven years ago, applications for admission to groups have always been at least double the numbers our groups can accomodate. We do not make much of an effort to advertise our program, and the response is still overwhelming. We are now examining ways of expanding the program. The community college which possesses the properly trained instructors to provide such a program can offer the community it serves reputable, high-quality interpersonal communication groups.[6]

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[5]Book, pp. 238-240.

[6]See Appendix, "Profile on Group Leadership (Speech 210) and Explorations in Communication (Communication 804)."

Such laboratory groups offer a supervised place in which to examine and clarify "the nature of self-other relationships."[7] Part of the attractiveness of these groups may be explained by examining some of the dominant themes in our society as they relate to human interaction: competitiveness, achievement, the work ethic, suppression of emotion, bureaucratic hierachies, reliance on roles, futureshock, and image management. These themes are counterproductive to the development of interpersonal competence. Yet human beings are social beings, and are motivated to relate with others in a satisfying manner.[8] When this desire is frustrated by the dominant society, anxiety and dissatisfaction with the quality of life is bound to increase. The interpersonal communication group by its very name offers an alternative, and enables people to take advantage of an opportunity to begin to express feelings, solicit response from others and test out new behaviors in a "safe" circumstance, change and influence, and to experience being part of a group working on common or similar goals in sometimes challenging, sometimes creative ways.[9] The college campus is itself in most ways a microcosm of society: it is predominantly cold and impersonal, oriented toward working as isolated individuals on tasks largely devoid of creativity, bureaucratic, with increasingly larger classes. It, too, provides one with a sense of powerlessness, isolation, insignificance, meaninglessness, and valued primarily for task-oriented achievement. A program of laboratory groups offers students from many fields the opportunity to take part in a revitalizing process.

For the remainder of this paper we shall continue to provide a rationale for offering the program we propose and for its design, and we intend to provide a model for this program in leadership training and laboratory groups which will be workable and effective at the community college level. We will specifically address the design model of the laboratory group, benefits we expect student-facilitators and process observers to derive from the group leadership experience, benefits we expect group members to derive from their participation, the overall instructional methodology (including the group leadership class, the laboratory group program, and evaluation methods).

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[7]Bochner and Kelly, p. 280.

[8]Harry Stack Sullivan, The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry (New York: W. W. Norton, 1953).

To briefly reiterate and expand on some of the reasons for and advantages in offering the type of program we propose: (1) we see increasing demand for colleges to offer courses which aim at understanding and increasing interpersonal communication skills, (2) this demand comes in the midst of limited resources (we cannot simply offer many more sections of low-enrollment courses), (3) there is a need for a second-level course in this area so that interpersonal skills can be explored more fully and developed more effectively, (4) in this area, and given the demand, only a course which combines cognitive and experiential input seems viable --we are not simply interested in impersonal knowledge, but in the application and integration of highly relevant interpersonal skills, (5) there is an affective domain which our society and our colleges generally do not equip us to deal with in an effective manner, and which cries out for attention; we are not simply thinking creatures, but feeling persons, and our lack of skills in this affective domain is both largely a result of and contributor to the impersonalness of our society, which leads to feelings of coldness, isolation, helplessness, boredom and hopelessness. We owe it to ourselves, our fellow persons and our society to contribute what we can to create interpersonal competency, and reach as many persons as we effectively can. We believe the program we offer can be useful in this regard.

While we know of no program exactly like what we propose in this paper, peer counseling programs and programs utilizing undergraduate facilitators have been employed successfully elsewhere.[10] There are a number of distinct advantages to this approach, and few if any disadvantages if the training and safeguards are rigorous. Among the advantages is the low cost of reaching many people, the experience that student-facilitators gain, the benefits participants derive from the groups facilitated by student-leaders, and the special rapport that can exist between group members and facilitators they see as peer (of course this depends on the ages of group members to some degree, yet even when ages are disparate, group members are likely to feel closer to someone they see as close in status--a student-facilitator --than to someone more removed, like a teacher).[11]

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[9]Warren G. Bennis, Edgar H. Schein, Fred I. Steele, and David E. Berlew, eds., Interpersonal Dynamics: Essays and Readings on Human Interaction (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey, 1968), p. 9.

[10]W. Brown, "Student-to-Student Counseling for Academic Adjustment," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 43, 8 (1965), 811-817 and T. Wolff,

Laboratory Group Design

We have borrowed what we believe are some of the best approaches from NTL-style T-groups,[11] Esalen-style encounter groups,[12] counseling groups,[13] and the field of general semantics.[14] We have experienced results which suggest to us that Luft is correct in saying, "given an opportunity to work in a laboratory group, most people become sufficiently involved so that they can feel and observe the processes while learning to conceptualize them. In this way participants learn something about their own behavior in groups and develop insights into group dynamics in general."[15] This seems to go on even with the presence, in our situation, of two-way mirrors and videotape equipment.

Like T-groups, we are concerned in the training of our facilitators and process observers with group dynamics and processes. We are also concerned with group members learning something about the functioning of a group, since they inevitably operate in a myriad of group situations and may be able to apply what they learn in the laboratory to other groups. Like the T-group, we are also emphasizing experience-based learning; the laboratory groups are held in two rooms of a three-room house trailer (the third room is the office of our Explorations in Communication program, the name we give to our program of groups, open to membership for anyone at the college or in the surrounding community) and the trailer is informal with a circular arrangement of bean bags in each meeting room; dress is informal and people do not go by titles, but rather by first names; the facilitators participate as members, though they also fulfill some special functions (modeling, mobilizing, management); the process observers do not participate in the bulk of the meeting, but lead the last ten to twenty minutes (this will be fully discussed later); the processes of the group are distinguished and clarified in those groups having process observers (some of ours don't); there is a permissive atmosphere; and phases in the development of the group may be identified.[16] In essence, in our less directive groups (we have some that are more directive) the assumption is that the most important thing for the facilitator to do is to discover

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"Undergraduates as Campus Mental Health Workers," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 48, 4 (1969), 294-304. Lane Community College in Eugene, Oregon has for several years run a highly successful peer-counseling program.

[11]Joseph Luft, Group Processes: An Introduction to Group Dynamics, 2nd ed., (Palo Alto, Ca.: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1970) and William G. Dyer, ed., Modern Theory and Method In Group Training (New York: Van Norstrand Reinhold Company, 1972).

what the priorities of the members are and what they want to do and aid them by supplying his own expertise (at times, when things are going very well, his expertise may tell him the best thing to do is remain silent). He should encourage members to experience, create experience, collect information and examine that information.[17] The track record of well-facilitated T-groups is quite long. It has been thirty years since the first NTL conference and T-group experience. There have been criticisms and attacks, most of which are greatly exaggerated. Evidence exists that these groups may in fact be less stressful than a university examination is for most students. With proper training of facilitators, adequate support systems, and proper guidelines for the group, borrowing from the T-group experience can be highly beneficial.[18]

Similarly, the encounter group experience has much to offer, and we have incorporated certain elements into our laboratory groups. Encounter groups began as a variation on the T-group experience, and have evolved over the years. Schutz outlines the main principles of encounter as honesty, awareness, free choice, responsibility, naturalness, and emphasizes that encounter is a way of life and "offers an alternative to the present structure of society, a structure which is based on deception, masking feelings, disowning the body, and similar duplicities."[19] Schutz further says that encounter differs from other techniques and approaches in that it stresses body methods, nonverbal techniques, and guided fantasies. "It also emphasizes self-responsibility and expands the meaning of that term to include responsibility for the state of the body."[20] Knowing numerous techniques is advocated so as to be able to find the best methods for working with each member. From encounter we have borrowed some structured exercises, attention to nonverbal body cues, some nonverbal methods for dealing with blocked communication, a large emphasis on free choice and responsibility, and attention to personal feelings. We also are alert to the lack of consistency between intentions and behavior, real and ideal self.[21] Schutz finds the results of encounter groups are overwhelmingly

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[12]William C. Schutz, Elements of Encounter (Big Sur, Ca.: Joy Press, 1973).

[13]Marilyn M. Bates and Clarence D. Johnson, Group Leadership: A Manual For Group Counseling Leaders (Denver, Co.: Love Publishing Company, 1972).

[14]S. I. Hayakawa, Language In Thought And Action, 3rd ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1972).

[15]Luft, pp. 2-3.

[16]Luft, pp. 7-9.

positive, and feels that when a group is poorly facilitated, the most likely results will be loss of interest and disintegration of the group. Schutz acknowledges damaging things can be done to members in encounter groups, but argues that with proper facilitation emphasizing self-responsibility, many unfortunate incidents are converted to positive learning experiences.[22]

From counseling methodology we have borrowed many mobilizing, catalytic techniques, as well as intervention techniques. We have also seen a clearer definition of well-model versus medical model, and it is this well-model which we employ. Counseling methodology has also helped us to establish adequate screening and support systems, including pre-group interviews, testing, orientations with cognitive maps like the Johari Window for understanding group process, maintenance groups for co-facilitators, and a strong belief in team-facilitation (involving at least two co-facilitators in each group, often with a third partner, a process observer).[23]

From the field of general semantics we have taken the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that language both reflects and shapes cultures and people.[24] Other therapeutic approaches run parallel to semantics in their awareness that language can provide a key to what is going on with the individual; we see this with rational-emotive therapy in the notion of irrational ideas affecting perception and interpretation of events and leading to dissatisfying consequences.[25] We also see semantic emphasis in Gestalt therapy in the attention to depersonalized language (it, people, they, and disowned language like "have to," and "can't").[26] We remain highly aware of the emphasis by Bochner and Kelly on communication skills development.

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[17]Anthony J. Reilly, "Interview with Leland Bradford," Group & Organization Studies, 1, 1 (March 1976), 16-17.

[18]Cary L. Cooper, "How Psychologically Dangerous Are T-Groups and Encounter Groups?" in Sensitivity Training and the Laboratory Approach: Readings About Concepts And Applications, ed. Robert T. Golembiewski and Arthur Blumberg (Itasca, Ill.: F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc.), pp. 254-255.

[19]Schutz, pp. 16-19.

[20]Schutz, pp. 20-21.

[21]Leland P. Bradford, Jack R. Gibb, and Kenneth D. Benne, T-Group Theory and Laboratory Method: Innovation in Re-education (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1964), p. 17.

[22]Schutz, p. 86.

[23]Bates and Johnson.

[24]J. Samuel Bois, The Art of Awareness, 2nd ed. (Dubuque, Ia: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1973), pp. 156-157.

With this amalgam of approaches influencing our laboratory groups, and with some groups that are more structured, some that are nonstructured, some that have process observers, some that don't, it becomes quite important that we have some criteria which are constant regarding the attitudes of our group facilitators. We train them and ask them to be empathic; to be genuine; to respect themselves and other people's feelings, experiences and potential; to be fully present and committed in the group; to confirm and support others in ways which build strengths; and to be transparent, to offer their own feelings to the group. Our facilitators intervene in the group process to aid members in engaging in the learning process through self-disclosure and seeking and offering feedback; to aid the members in building an atmosphere of trust and commitment by modeling acceptance, understanding, caring, respect for others, and by helping others see their own worth; by helping members see alternative behaviors, and supporting them in developing more effective communication patterns; to aid by providing and modeling feedback to members, and to help them see themselves in new ways; and, our facilitators intervene to help members see the applicability of their new knowledge and behaviors to the world outside of group. The primary tools facilitators use in doing their job are active listening; modeling openness, honesty and caring; graceful confrontation; silence (learning to choose with care when to intervene); offering feedback; struggling to develop trust; sensitizing the group to the "here and now" and helping the group to focus in that area; displaying warmth; managing or traffic-directing the interactions so that they are direct, "owned," sharing, non-probing of others, [illegible] encountering rather than assuming; modeling flexibility and being flexible; and above all, sharing themselves genuinely; also, mobilizing skills, including knowing a variety

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[25]Albert Ellis and Robert A Harper, A New Guide To Rational Living (North Hollywood, Ca.: Wilshire Book Company, 1975).

[26]John O. Stevens, Awareness: exploring, experimenting, experiencing (Moab, Ua.: Real People Press, 1971).

[27]William P. Golden, Jr., "On Becoming a Trainer," in Modern Theory And Method In Group Training, ed. William G. Dyer (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1972), pp. 12-25, and Bates and Johnson, pp. 41-76 and 107-140.

catalytic exercises, both verbal and nonverbal.[27]

In summary than, the framework of the Explorations in Communication groups, like most laboratory groups, is built promote learning experientially in small groups; to foster a climate of experimentation; with a group size that allows each participant ample opportunity to become involved in the interaction and yet a size which will allow for diversity of individuals and feedback and space between individual contributions; with an emphasis on feedback; providing leadership in the form of a team of co-facilitators, and often a process observer; dealing with emotions and effects of emotions on the communication processes; to provide support to match the anxiety producing behaviors which are part of the group process (self-examination, feedback, confrontation); to allow for ambiguity, responsibility and free choice; to provide catalytic exercises at times deemed appropriate in a structured group, and to follow an agenda which focuses on members' immediate concerns in our nonstructured groups; to do some basic screening of group members, and make them keenly aware that this is a group based upon a well model, and is not a therapy group or a group focused on topical issues; to provide members with an orientation and group contract which makes them fully aware of what the focus and potentials are. The group is based upon existential principles outlined in the group contract,[28] the "open letter,"[29] and the presentation of the Johari Window--all given to members prior to their first group meeting. It is also clear to members before their first group session that they will be learning by experiencing and working with new behaviors, including dealing with emotions; that they will be learning through an inductive process which calls for their active involvement; and that they will be dealing with ambiguous situations, in which they cannot rely on rights or wrongs, but are asked to genuinely share what they are feeling; finally, that they will benefit most by creating an open, caring, sharing and seeking of feedback.[30] In this setting, they are told, there will be room to work on their personal goals if they are congruent with group goals, and to in any case share their personal goals so that there will be no hidden agendas.

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[28]Gerard Egan, Face to Face: The Small-Group Experience and Interpersonal Growth (Monterey, Ca.: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1973), pp. 25-31.

[29]Bates and Johnson, pp. 259-261.

[30]Kim Giffin and Bobby R. Patton, Personal Communication In Human Relations (Columbus, Oh.: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company), pp. 2-3 and 8-9.

Skills Development

Given the orientation of the laboratory group described in preceding pages, we believe both members of the facilitation teams and members of the groups can work on building effective communication skills. Basic communication skills like empathic communication (including attending behavior and active listening), descriptiveness (both in the Gibb non-evaluative sense and the specific and detailed sense that English teachers so frequently lecture on), owning feelings and thoughts (opposite of blaming others and done by indicating an acceptance of one's own feelings and thoughts, i.e., a responsibility for them), self disclosure (actively sharing how one feels about one's self and others with significant others when appropriate), and behavioral flexibility (seeing alternatives and choosing the most effective way to relate at the time with those present, as well as being committed to work on developing new behaviors when they are deemed desirable by the person) can be developed or improved.[31] Facilitators and process observers come to the group experience with these skills already developed to a high degree during previous courses like interpersonal communication and during the stages of their training before they facilitate a group, and in group they can continue to improve their skills. Both members and facilitators and observers can learn in the course of group to be freer in interactions with others, to manage interpersonal anxiety more effectively, to learn how to show concern for and support to others, to take initiative in contacting others more easily, to share more openly and significantly with those who are important to them, to be less fearful in expressing feelings and emotions, to come from behind their mask more often, to accept themselves as really being okay and deal with those behaviors they want to change or work on or develop, to be less fearful of intimacy and become more familiar with its warmth and potential, to be more caringly confrontive and to accept this from others in a useful way, to become more assertive and less passive or agressive, to work with themselves and others on being less phoney and more genuine, to commit themselves more intensely to others without fearing a loss of identity, and to become more self-aware in general and specifically more aware of personal goals, directions in life, and strengths.[32] Facilitators and process observers, during the

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[31]Bochner and Kelly, pp. 289-291.

[32]Egan, p. 23, and George M. Gazda, Human Relations Development: A Manual for Educators (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1973), pp. 24-25.

pre-group training in the group leadership class and during the course of facilitating a group, will develop competencies in the following area: observation and data collection and diagnosis, entry and contract development, mobilizing and design, intervention and management, ethical decision making, continuity, follow-up support and termination, and peer team building.[33] Both members of the facilitation team and group members build skills in decision-making, handling responsibility and being responsible, being sensitive to body messages and inconsistencies.[34] A number of studies spaning several decades confirm Lewin's findings that groups and group decision to focus on and work in certain areas is far more effective under proper facilitation than the lecture method.[35]

Instructional Strategy

We have seven years of experience with refining an instructional design which is remarkably similar to that of Bochner and Kelly. Some important areas in which we are different are in our approach to the laboratory and the link between the laboratory and examinations. While the dominant emphasis in the laboratory is interpersonal competence, personal growth remains a powerful issue. As we see it, these two foci have considerable interplay.[36] Our examinations are all competency based, and done either as oral examinations or simulation examinations where the student facilitates a group for an abbreviated session. The examinations are designed with feedback to the student of an immediate nature, and are largely seen both by students and teachers as a helpful tool to prepare the student for the facilitation experience. While Bochner and Kelly suggest examinations often do have a negative link, they also point out that this need not be so.[37] We stress throughout the instructional design both cognitive and affective learning.

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[33]Ronald O. Lippitt, Kenneth D. Benne, Leland P. Bradford, and Jack R. Gibb, "The Professionalization of Laboratory Practice," in The Laboratory Method of Changing and Learning, eds. Kenneth D. Benne, Leland P. Bradford, Jack R. Gibb, and Ronald O. Lippitt (Palo Alto, Ca.: Science and Behavior Books, Inc., 1975), pp. 475-477, and Bates and Johnson.

[34]Schutz, pp. 16-19.

[35]Luft, p. 3, and J. Jeffries McWhirter, "Counselor Preparation Through Small Group Interaction," Small Group Behavior, 5, 1 (February 1974), pp. 28-29.

[36]Bochner and Kelly, p. 291-296.

[37]Bochner and Kelly, p. 296.

The group leadership class (Speech 210) is an elective and transferable course to a four-year institution. It is offered for five semester units, and demands a minimum of about fifteen hours per week from the student. It is a rigorous class in which all students train to be either facilitators or process observers for Explorations in Communication groups. Students must have a prerequisite of a B grade or better in an interpersonal communication class, and it is preferable that they have some experience as a member of a group, ideally an Explorations group. During the first eleven weeks of the course, students go through our training program for three hours a week in class as a whole group (though we often break into small groups for discussion or practice) and for an additional four hours a week minimum at arranged times with small groups or the instructors or instructional aides. During the next six weeks, those students surviving the training (almost all do) facilitate an Explorations group for two hours a week, attend class in the form of a maintenance group (a group lead by the instructors and instructional aides for the purpose of modeling, discussing problems in the Explorations groups facilitated by the members of the maintenance groups, and for working on personal and interpersonal issues of the student members) for two hours a week, attend a lecture/discussion class for one hour a week, consult with the instructors or instructional aides for two hours a week while reviewing videotapes made of their Explorations group meeting of that same week, and consult with the other members of their facilitation team for two hours a week. Throughout the semester there is a great deal of reading the students must do in addition to the involvement stated above. The last two weeks of the class involve debriefing, reviewing the semester's experiences, planning how we could improve the program for the coming semester, and post-testing (students are pre-tested at the start of the semester). In addition to what is described above, there are three workshops held on weekends, each lasting six hours, which students must attend. Lastly, there is an orientation for group members, held on the weekend and lasting for three hours, which students of the group leadership class must attend.

There are several textbooks for the class and a host of recommended readings and handouts. The textbooks we currently use are Face to Face by Gerard Egan, Group Leadership by Bates and Johnson, and a syllabus of selected readings (unpublished). We will soon begin using in addition to those already mentioned Elements of Encounter by Schutz, and The Critical Incident in Growth Groups: Theory and Technique by Cohen and Smith.[38]

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[38]Arthur M. Cohen and R. Douglas Smith, The Critical Incident In Growth Groups: Theory and Technique (La Jolla, Ca.: University Associates, Inc., 1976).

Some highlights and explanation of various components of the class may be of value. We will elaborate on (1) the workshops, (2) the class training groups, (3) the competency list, (4) the training videotapes, (5) the maintenance groups, and (6) the Exploration in Communication groups, as well as (7) the roles which the teachers, instructional aides, course assistant, facilitators and process observers fulfill.

It is virtually impossible to conduct this class in an ethically sound manner which provides adequate training for the students without using time outside the scheduled three hours a week in the classroom. In the classroom, we have a two-hour session once a week, and a one-hour session once a week. We make maximum use of this time, scheduling lectures; small group discussions; doing demonstrations of various facits of leadership skills (active listening, traffic directing, confronting, and others) using student volunteers in the demonstration group; practicing skills in dyads, triads and small groups of five to eight people. When we use dyads, triads and small groups, the teachers and a team of instructional aides (we have six highly-trained paraprofessionals which the teachers supervise) act as observer-consultants. Occasionally we make videotapes of practice sessions that go on in the classroom, and have found it useful for the class to critique these at a time shortly thereafter.

The workshops and all other out-of-classtime activities are covered by the four hours a week of arranged time, which we require the students to put in. In fact, the four hours a week is an average; some weeks we ask more, some weeks less. The workshops come at three stages of development. The first one occurs at the end of the first week of the semester, during the weekend. As with each workshop it lasts six hours. We begin with a two-hour period of test taking. We conduct both pre-tests and post-tests; the post-tests are taken in the last week of the semester. We use the tests to measure the influence of the program on the students. The instruments we are currently using are FIRO-B and F, the Conceptual Systems Test, the HIM-B, and the Johari Window Test. We share the results of the tests with the students, and use them in counseling the students. Each test serves a unique function: the FIRO tests get at the issues of inclusion, control and affection, both in terms of what is expressed and what is wanted on the behavior and feeling levels; the CST results address attitudes and needs that have a direct bearing on how one might function in a group (need for structure and order, need to help people, need for people, general distrust, interpersonal aggression, and feelings of control over one's life being outside oneself); the HIM-B has sixteen dimensions

which predict how one might communicate with others in a small group setting; the Johari Window Test is based on Luft's work and measures levels of seeking feedback and self-disclosure.[39] There is a short break after the tests and we resume with an hour session of lecture about the goals of the program and the expectations of the instructors, and a question and answer period. A lunch break follows and we resume with a two-hour microlab and debriefing session at the end of the microlab. The purpose of the microlab is to provide an experiential base for the debriefing and later discussions of inclusion, control and affection needs as they arise in individuals and in a group. The microlab also affords students an opportunity to meet one another through a series of nonverbal and verbal experiences; it contributes to a loosening up of the class and a building of cohesion. The second workshop is held on the weekend following the fourth week of the semester. We run this workshop on Friday and Saturday nights and on Sunday afternoon, each time for six hours, so that we can work with a small group. Students choose one time to attend, and we limit each session to ten to twelve students. The agenda consists of a group experience for two hours based on the model we use for a structured Explorations in Communication group (a catalyst is introduced); the group is facilitated by the instructors or an instructor and an instructional aide; another instructional aide acts as a process observer. The session is followed by a short break, and we resume with discussion and a fuller debriefing. After some stretching exercises, we begin another two-hour group experience, facilitated by the same team, but with an unstructured approach. In this way students are exposed to both kinds of Explorations in Communication groups we will offer later in the semester. Again, there is a debriefing period at the end of the group meeting, led by the process observer. The third workshop is offered at three time periods and with the same limits on enrollment as the second workshop. The workshop comes at the end of the tenth week of training. At the fifth or sixth week of training, facilitation teams are formed, consisting of two co-facilitators and a process observer in each team (some teams do not have process observers when there are an insufficient number of students enrolled in the class).

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[39]For copies of the tests and manuals write to Consulting Psychologists Associates in Palo Alto, California for FIRO-B and F; O. J. Harvey at the University of Colorado for the CST; William Hill at California Polytechnical College, Pomona for the HIM-B; for information on the Johari Window Test write to Sheldon Nyman at Golden West College, Huntington Beach, California.

Students are assigned the role of facilitator or process observer by the instructors (in consultation with instructional aides) based on observation of their skills, their preferences, our need to match students in teams to lead groups at a variety of hours arranged according to their preferences, our desire to have complementary members on each team as much as possible, and scores on the diagnostic tests given in the first workshop. The teams work together both in and out of class in preparation for the third workshop. The agenda for this workshop is a repetition of the following pattern for six hours with one twenty minute break coming about midway: a team volunteers to facilitate a group for the people at the workshop, they either introduce a catalyst or initiate an unstructured meeting (depending on the type of group they will lead for the Explorations program; this, again, is assigned based on teacher judgments at the fifth or sixth week) which they lead for one-half hour, for ten minutes the process observer of the facilitation team leads the group in a debriefing, then the facilitation team offers a self-critique, followed by a critique with suggestions from the instructors, instructional aides and the group. The instructors and aides are involved as members of the group throughout the session.

Class training groups, consisting of about ten students each and co-facilitated by instructional aides, are begun the second week of class and run through the eighth week. These meet once a week at two hours arranged outside of class time. The purpose of the groups is to give the students an experiential base of knowledge about group membership, to allow the students the opportunity to see the instructional aides model facilitation, and to discuss facilitation decisions and techniques as they relate to the philosophy of our groups. Process observation occurs and the students are invited to actively participate in the debriefing.

Competency lists are made for each skill and unit of knowledge the students should have before actually walking in to an Explorations in Communication group as part of a facilitation team.[40] Each student has

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[40]For copies of this list write to Sheldon Nyman, Golden West College, Huntington Beach, California.

a copy of the list, which is distributed the first day of the class. When a student feels has adequate knowledge about an item on the list and has had the opportunity to practice a skill to his satisfaction, he sets an appointment with an instructor or instructional aide to check him out for competency on that item. He is graded "deficient," "satisfactory," or "superior." If he is deficient, he must review and practice some more, and set another appointment to be checked out again. He must do this until he obtains a "satisfactory" level on the item. At his choice, he can continue to come back and try to attain a "superior" level. He must attain at least a "satisfactory" rating on each item on the list prior to getting final approval to be part of a facilitation team. All students who attain this level of competency will work as part of a facilitation team. If one member of a facilitation team is not given approval by the due date of the competency list (one week prior to the start of the Exploration groups), an instructional aide will step into the facilitation team to replace the student who has dropped out. A special program of study and an alternative project to facilitating a group are determined for students who do not fulfill the terms of the competency list; this is done by consultation between the instructors and the student, and the student may continue to work on the competency list so that he is competent by the end of the semester. The competency list is the basis for a mid-term grade.

A series of nine videotapes are on color cassettes available to students throughout the day and evening in the Library Media Center. Most of the cassettes are thirty minutes long, and are of high quality, consisting of lectures, group discussions, interviews with former facilitators in the program and former members of Explorations groups, demonstrations of various facets of group facilitation by the instructors or instructional aides in live group settings.[41] Students are assigned to watch these tapes at times when the subject matter of a tape is pertinent to material being covered in class.

Maintenance groups have been discussed briefly at an earlier point in this paper. Like the training groups, they are limited in size; however, they have a somewhat different purpose (discussed earlier) and are facilitated by a team composed of an instructor and two instructional aides. They begin at the tenth week of the semester and continue through the sixteenth week.

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[41]Sheldon Nyman and Jon Smedley, "Nine Videocassettes on Group Leadership" (Huntington Beach, Ca.: Coast Community College District, 1975 and 1977); for distribution write to Doug Larsen, Media Production Center, Golden West College.

Exploration in Communications groups, membership in which is open to the students, faculty, staff and administration of Golden West College and anyone else who would like to join (newspapers in the surrounding communities carry application information; television Channel 50, KOCE, broadcasts information; and notices are sent to various community groups; children are not accepted for membership) begin with the eleventh week of the semester and continue through the seventeenth week. The facilitation team works two hours in this setting, and is expected to spend a minimum of one hour in team preparation for the group meeting and one hour after the group debriefing about the meeting. The team members are also expected to jointly write a journal report about the meeting for the instructors. A videotape is made of each meeting, and the team is required to review the tape before their next group meeting in consultation with an instructor or aide.

The last component of the class which calls for description is the roles within the structure of the class. The teachers serve in a number of capacities and offer a number of services; they lecture, demonstrate, consult privately with individual students or teams of students; they organize and take significant roles in the workshops; they organize written materials for the students, review readings, act as facilitators for maintenance groups, supervise and bear ultimate responsibility for the Explorations groups, test students on the competency lists, conduct and grade students in a competency-based final examination; supervise the course assistant and the instructional aides, and provide leadership in weekly staff-team meetings, as well as a program of continued learning for these individuals (it should be noted that all instructional aides are officially students on advanced independent study contracts with Golden West College; most are also students at four-year institutions); the teachers have also for the past two years been engaged in designing the previously-mentioned series of videotapes.

The instructional aides are advanced students under contract with the instructors.[42] They are hand-picked by the instructors, usually from a previous group of facilitators trained in the class, and after formal interviews. They receive pay as tutors for out-of-classroom time spent with students in the class. They are highly competent and either intend to pursue or are pursuing their education in speech communication, psychology, social welfare, or human services at four-year institutions. They invest a minimum of fifteen hours a week in this program, and sometimes a great deal more. Their contract spells out their primary tasks.

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[42]See this contract in Appendix.

The course assistant for the program is a three-quarter time, salaried, classified employee. She is a paraprofessionally-trained facilitator. She organizes all administrative aspects of the Explorations In Communication program; she keeps all materials for use in the class ready for use and up to date; she schedules the groups and rooms for them; she organizes and handles all registration for the groups, and keeps attendance records of all groups (we are on a positive accounting); she organizes and prepares materials for the orientation program before groups begin; she helps the instructional aides in their work; she supervises a student assistant who helps her; she answers all correspondence for the program and receives and answers phone calls; she is trained in group process and use of videotape with groups and tapes videocassettes of all group meetings. She maintains an office for the Explorations program, and keeps track of all data and records. She personally calls each drop-out from a group to ascertain their reasons for dropping the program. She consults with the group leaders about their groups when they seek her advice and reactions.

A great deal has already been said about facilitators, so I will not belabor the topic. Facilitators are responsible for doing a one-to-one pre-group interview with each group member following the orientation; often this is done over the telephone (it would be ideal to have both people meet, of course). Facilitators and process observers are made keenly aware that they have an ethical responsibility to the group to not drop out of the program once the group begins; if the going gets rough, they are encouraged to consult with an instructional aide, or an instructor.

We will involve ourselves now in a lengthier discussion of process observers and their role in the group, since we have not talked much about the role thus far and there is infinately less reading material about the role; while facilitators by a variety of names are common to virtually all groups, process observers have mainly been used in T-groups. Process observation has long played an important part in discussion and task-oriented groups, even when no single person is designated to fulfill the role of observer; observation debriefing by the members facilitates analysis and evaluation of the group's progress. William Hill makes the value of the evaluation step abundantly clear in his Learning Thru Discussion method; Dewey and others stress its value as well. It is profitable for students of group dynamics to experience the group processes at work as observers; in this role they are able to see what they were only vaguely aware of as group members.[43] It has become apparent that the awareness of group process can be

a valuable tool in the T-group as well. Understanding group processes can facilitate both personal and group growth.[44]

Leland Bradford, instrumental in the founding of the National Training Laboratory in Group Dynamics (NTL), relates the beginning of process observation in NTL's early groups. After their meetings, the research observers would get together and debrief in private. One evening, some of the group participants asked to come and listen. The ensuing discussion of the group processes provided an exciting learning experience for the entire group. Bradford recalls, "We discovered that experience does not necessarily result in learning, but experience with feedback does result in experiential learning."[45] Given that the role of process observer can enhance group and facilitate experiential learning, we will focus on the role, skills, duties, and benefits of the role.

The process observer is an equal, functioning member of the facilitation team. While not part of the interaction during the meeting (in the interest of maintaining objectivity and credibility with members), the observer is present in the group, actively listening and recording pertinent data. The observer will be responsible for observing interpersonal interaction, the environment of the group, the state of being of the group, and the processes.[46] He will be responsible for debriefing the group at the end of the meetings, leading the group in discussion of the meaning of significant observations, and leading a discussion of what can be done to improve the group. He can serve a helpful, active function in issues that need special attention.[47] The main function of the observer is to be able to objectively record what goes on in the group, making non-judgmental observations in the group debriefing session. Process observation requires knowledge in the area of group dynamics, and skills at listening, observing, recording, reporting, and facilitation. This requires a substantial amount of training; we begin observation training the first class meeting.

The observer must have an understanding of the group model; it's boundaries, goals, and applications. It is also advisable for the observer to have prior group experience as a member to gain first-hand knowledge of how group works and feels from a member's perspective, and also how it feels to receive the kind of feedback a process observer can provide.

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[43]John K. Brilhart, Effective Group Discussion (Dubuque, Io.: Wm. C. Brown Company, 1967, cited in Small Group Communication: A Reader, eds. Robert S. Cathcart and Larry Samovar (Dubuque, Io.: Wm. C. Brown Company, 1974), pp. 212-213.

[44]Cohen and Smith, p. 155.

[45]Reilly, p. 20.

The eyes of the observer should constantly monitor the nonverbal communication within the group. She must also develop keen listening skills to monitor the verbal communications, picking up surface content, along with meanings, incongruities and implications which may not be apparent to group members or facilitators during the meeting.[48] The observer must develop the ability to record the observations coherently and quickly. Several methods may be used, ranging from selective note taking to various forms, grids or charts. The observer should be familiar with these tools, using those that will provide desired results for focusing the group in the debriefing. It will be necessary for her to be quick in her survey of notes, and to synthesize this information into useful observations for the group immediately following the affective portion of the meeting. She must be able to state this data in non-judgmental observations or owned speculations about the significance of the observations and solicit reactions from the group members. She may also find it beneficial to condense some of the observations and discussion into a letter to be sent to group members between meetings if a substantial time lapse occurs (our groups meet once a week and we ask observers to send out these letters; the program bears the cost of mailing). This gives members an aid in thinking about group issues before the next group meeting.

The process observer must possess the facilitation skills necessary to conduct the debriefing session. This requires directing the discussion, soliciting further observations from the members, and guiding the group in analysis, evaluation and suggestions for future process. The observer must be prepared to handle confrontation and reactions to the observations in a manner profitable for the group; he must remember this is not a time to get back into the affective portion of the meeting, and he must steer the group clear of doing this.

The benefits and implications of having a process observer can be seen on three levels: benefits to the group, to the facilitation team, and to the individual serving as observer. Most people enter our groups with the goal of heightening self-awareness and communicating with other human beings more effectively. The facilitators will be dealing in the early meetings primarily with intra- and interpersonal issues, providing feed-

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[46]John Keltner, "General Description of the Theory and Practicum in Self-Awareness and Interpersonal Communication Training," an unpublished paper to participants (May 1977), p. 2.

[47]David H. Jenkins, "Feedback and Group Self-evaluation," Group Development, ed. Leland P Bradford (La Jolla, Ca.: Univsersity Associates, 1974), pp 87-89.

back, and working to create an environment which enables members to try out new behaviors and be open. The process observer will focus primarily on group issues and processes. She may deal with such items as how the group deals with silences and when do the silences seem to come, how the group reacts to confrontation, what is happening with interaction between members and leaders and is there emergent leadership, are goals emerging and clear and are members working to attain their goals. Process observation will blend self-awareness with group process awareness, helping members to synthesize the group experience and apply it to their lives outside of the group. In addition to benefiting the group, the process observer will be an invaluable asset to the facilitation team. He is in a position of greater objectivity than the co-facilitators, and he can provide them with information about and evaluation of the group's progress and possible problem areas. He will be able to provide the facilitators with feedback on their leadership skills, and the effects of their interventions on the group. The team as a whole will debrief and discuss group needs and goals for the next meeting; all team members will view the videotape of their meeting, ideally together, to check their perceptions and aid in their discussions. Finally, there is personal benefit for the person choosing to serve as a process observer. She will develop a working knowledge of group dynamics and group facilitation skills. She will develop invaluable listening and recording skills with increased ability to make non-judgmental observations and to use these observations for analytic and evaluative purposes, as well as take off points for fuller discussion by group members. These collective skills will be personally beneficial and applicable to other group situations, to possible later use in facilitating a group, and to fuller understanding of interpersonal dynamics.

As we work with the role of process observer, further implications and responsibilities may become apparent. There is need for further research and development of observation techniques, tools, debriefing skills, and their application to group. However, it is clear that the trained observer can be a catalyst for group progress, growth and success.[49]

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[48]Jenkins, pp. 82 and 87.

[49]We are currently working on development of a number of forms and refinement of others in an effort to aid and better train process observers.

Since we usually have about thirty-five students in the group leadership class, and somewhere between 120 and 160 people in the Explorations groups as members, and supervision of the training and group program must all come from a team of nine people (two instructors, six aides, and the course assistant), it is imperative that this senior training team be cohesive. This team formally meets several days before the semester begins to discuss all plans for the semester; an outline of what will be done each week is drawn up with input from all, new ideas are examined and decisions are made about incorporating them, and a final schedule is arrived at and distributed to all members of this senior team. There are meetings for this group scheduled once a week for an hour per meeting to discuss the current status of the class and its students, successes and failure, and necessary revisions in the schedule outline. In addition, there are many informal meetings between the instructors and one or more members of the team that go on throughout the semester. We now see a need to set aside more time for formal meetings; an additional hour a week will be devoted to a study session for the team to increase knowledge and skills.[50] Please see Figure 1 for the connection and lines of responsibility between the various roles that interplay in the class and Explorations in Communication program.

Ethical Concerns And Safeguards

Many concerns have been advanced by critics within and without the personal growth through groups movement, and rightly so. Groups can be destructive without proper ethical considerations and safeguards. We won't survey the critical literature here; suffice it to say that it is readily available. We do wish to raise some of the possible pitfalls and deal with them.

One problem which often occurs with new and insecure facilitators is overleading. The facilitators are jumping in at every opportunity and dominating the group. A worse version of this is the facilitators who try to dominate for fear of losing leadership of the group, or still worse, those who are very authoritarian by nature. We discuss these concerns with facilitators before we let them work with a group. We especially touch base with them on styles of leadership and the desirability of emerging leadership from group members. Since we operate with three person teams with complementary members, we stress the desirability of members of the team giving each other feedback on how they are coming across in group.

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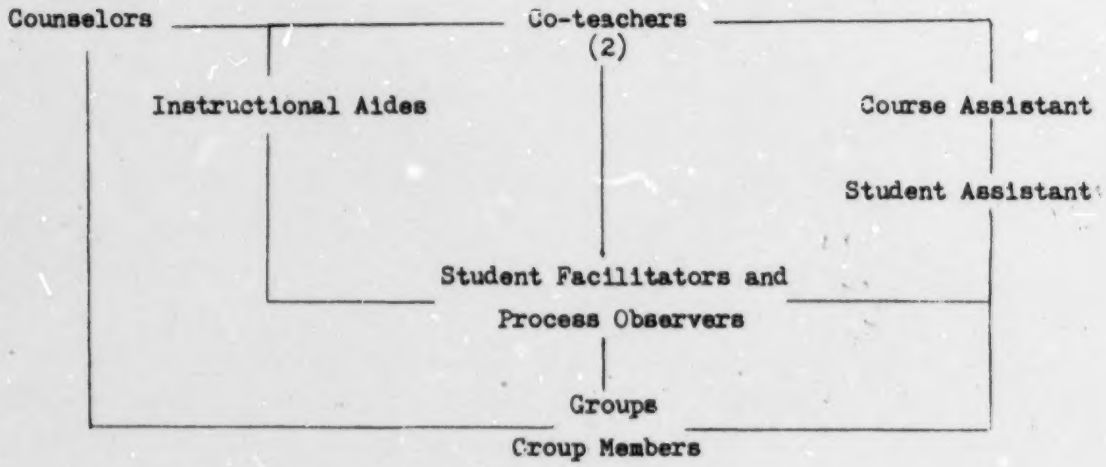
[50] In some ways this is similar to the "executive planning sessions" discussed by Bochner and Kelly, pp. 295-296.

Figure 1 - ORGANIZATIONAL CHART FOR GROUP LEADERSHIP AND EXPLORATIONS IN COMMUNICATION



Another pitfall is the facilitators and group becoming overly clinical and emphasizing the cognitive and speculative domains to the neglect of the affective and confrontive domains. We work with the facilitators on recognizing feeling-centered communication and distinguishing it from thinking-centered communication. We train them with various techniques (picking up body cues, repeating key words, acting things out nonverbally) for centering on feelings. When the group is assured that there will also be a cognitive-centered debriefing at the end of the meeting, the members and facilitators know there will be a time and place for their thoughts. Actually the separation is not so clean or complete, and probably that is not even desirable, but we are focusing here on the emphasis during the group's time together. While the facilitators will have feelings about people and events in the group and opportunities to share these, they must be willing to subordinate their personal agenda to the needs of the group and its members; facilitators becoming overly involved on their personal issues have proven less effective. It will also be a detriment if the group leaders feel they have all the answers for the group. On the first issue, we make it clear to facilitators that their prime concern and responsibility is to the members; we also provide them with a maintenance group so that they may use that group to resolve or work on their personal agendas. On the second issue we stress active listening as a very real way to learn more about how the members see the world from their perspective; we emphasize that there is no right, and that members build strength by coming to their own answers, and that what will work for one person will not necessarily work for others. A very large pitfall is misuse of group; we teach that group is a place to nurture others and build strengths, to find friends and build support systems, not to be destructive, hurtful and belittle. We stress confrontation with grace, which for us means that caring and a desire to become fully involved with the other to the point of working through difficulty must be antecedent to confrontation, and that a climate of trust is prerequisite to any intense confrontation. We emphasize cognitively learning behaviors that are applicable outside of group, and experiencing them within group. Frustration and floundering can be a pitfall when not accompanied by learning and, similarly, silence can be punishing. We stress methods of working with frustration creatively, while monitoring the nonverbal cues of members to gage levels of anxiety. Silence can be very beneficial, a time for deep reflection; it can also be agonizing and

destructive when not accompanied by learning. We teach appropriate ways of intervening after gauging which type of silence is occurring.[51] The prime requisites we stress for our leaders is understand group process and know what a group needs, be tuned in to the group so that functions the group is not fulfilling are clear, have the ability and work to accomplish what is needed by the group, and put the group and its members first for the time that you share with them--challenge yourself to do what is beneficial for the group even when it is difficult for you.[52] Along with facilitators' competencies, we take into account their attitude (does it reflect warmth, caring or hostility?); their personal qualities, such as, self-awareness and intelligence; we provide ample models for them (training groups, aides, teachers); they lead under direct supervision in class and in workshops; they co-lead and learn from one another; and there is an on-going program of intellectual learning.[53] All this is done to safeguard the members of Explorations groups, as well as to train the facilitators to the best of our abilities and resources. Whenever there has been a choice between compromising training or fighting for greater resources, we have fought for the resources and have always met (or nearly always) an understanding college administration, which has been overwhelmingly supportive of our work. We have taken virtually all the steps suggested by research at Stanford University to safeguard group members and meet ethical responsibilities; these include: providing a very full orientation for group members (discussing what group is like and its focus, and some of its hazards; providing a microlab experience and discussing that; and answering all questions, as well as debriefing); cautioning participants that groups can be stressful and cause emotional upset, and warning them that groups would be videotaped for confidential viewing by facilitators of the group and instructors or aides for learning purposes; participants are encouraged to speak with the co-facilitators if they are upset by group, and they are introduced to the teachers and aides and course assistant as possible resources; counselors are available readily to group members, and co-facilitators are urged to refer greatly disturbed members to the teachers or an available counselor; we have rigorous standards in the selection of facilitators and process observers, and one of the top criteria are that they be responsible and caring; all group

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[51]Gordon Lippitt, "Selected Guidelines For Laboratory-Group Trainers," in Modern Theory And Method In Group Training, ed. William G. Dyer (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1972), pp. 62-64, and Reilly, pp. 17-18.

meetings are videotaped and viewed by the teachers or aides, and if things seem amiss, problems are discussed with the facilitation team.[54] There is some concern over the lack of clarity about objectives, particularly the objective of openness, which some have interpreted to be a "tell your life story," and others have interpreted as brutal honesty.[55] Our objectives are quite clear to members and facilitators, in addition we hope members will come up with some clearly-stated personal objectives and we work with them on this. The teachers cover objectives and the group contract at the orientation for all members; objectives are discussed with members in the pre-group interview; and there is an on-going process of clarifying goals in group with assessment of goal attainment coming at the end of group (when possible all assessments stress the positive progress made toward goal attainment in specific terms). Our emphasis on openness is that it be done with caring, at appropriate times, as part of a process of building a relationship, with people one cares about, and when there is receptivity. Some concern exists about breaking down people's defenses; such is not our purpose. We encourage a trusting climate, a climate of support, and encourage people to ease their defenses down to where they feel is comfortable; defenses exist as a protection, and we do not desire or attempt to rip them away. We accept member applications on a first-come, first-served basis; however, some screening is done: the pre-group interview is one step and the orientation another (some people will select themselves out once they are fully aware of what they are getting into); we also tell prospective members that if they are undergoing therapy, they should check with their therapist before joining a group; it is emphasized that these are not therapy groups and are not a substitute for therapy. Because we are a college program, we feel we must have tighter screening procedures than many other group programs. We limit the size of the group so it is manageable (ten members per group), and strive for diversity among members ages, sex and backgrounds (some of this information is available from their applications). We put people in the groups randomly, and discourage couples or families from joining the same group, so as to minimize risk. We train facilitators and process observers in making the exercises they use in structured groups relevant to the learning and stage of development of the group; thus, we minimize chances of exercises being used inappropriately.[56]

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[52]William C. Schutz, "The Leader As Completer," in Small Group Communication: A Reader, 2nd ed., eds. Robert S. Cathcart and Larry Samovar (Dubuque, Io.: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1974), pp. 166-168.

A major criticism of groups is that their effects are not lasting because people return to climates which are not supportive of the changes they would like to make (plus, it is risky to make those changes with people who do not understand the group experience the former member has been through), or worse members experience being abandoned, cut off and being alone, and may come to feel their newly acquired skills really aren't useful.[57] We train facilitators in dealing with these reentry problems.[58] Reentry is discussed in the group during the last meeting, support teams are formed from among the group members so each member has a team, and contracts are written for taking a few behaviors out to the world outside group and applying them in a realistic manner (members and facilitators scrutinize all the contracts to make certain they are realistic and specific). Some training programs apparently do not make facilitators aware of the mechanisms of injury; we point out that the ways in which people can suffer at the hands of a group are through attacks by the leaders or members, rejection by the leaders or group, failure to attain unrealistic goals, coercive expectations from leaders or the group, or information overload which leads to confusion and an inability to cope with a barrage of feedback.[59] Perhaps because we send in balanced co-facilitation teams, we do not experience these difficulties as often as other programs; our facilitation teams are trained to be caring, not attacking; warm and accepting, nonjudgmental, not rejecting; they are attuned to unrealistic goals and expectations and confront these; and they are taught techniques for slowing the pace of feedback down so that members do not feel overwhelmed and unable to cope. Members are encouraged in the orientation to group to speak with their facilitators if they do not like what is going on or if they are not getting what they want; to share this with the group; they are told that the group is their's, for their benefit, and that they have a right to be there and a right to ask for what they want.

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[53]William C. Schutz, Here Comes Everybody (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971), pp. 241-254.

[54]Morton Lieberman, Irvin Yalom, and Matthew Miles, Encounter Groups: First Facts (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1973), pp. 169-170.

[55]Steven F. Feinberg, "Some Questions about Ethics and Responsibilities in Sensitivity Training," in Sensitivity Training and the Laboratory Approach: Readings About Concepts and Applications, eds. Robert T. Golembiewski and Arthur Blumberg (Itasca, Il.: F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., 1977), pp. 191-192.

[56]Feinberg, pp. 191-196.

Research And Evaluation

Until recently, it has been difficult for us to do research on the Explorations groups and the group leadership class. However, two years ago we requested additional staff and a year ago we hired our course assistant. We now can begin a program of research in addition to what we did in the past: collect evaluative questionnaires on the group experience from all group members, do occasional studies, diagnostic testing of students in the leadership class, and videotape. We are now engaged in our first testing of group members for effects on their communication style.[60] We will continue to study drop outs, and to analyze questionnaires completed by group members.[61] We ask students in the class to write a self-evaluation and an evaluation of their group's progress. We also receive evaluation reports on a regular basis from the instructional aides.

Summary, Conclusions and Future Directions

We began by drawing attention to certain needs we see, namely, the need to spread interpersonal communication skills and answer the demand coming from the academic and surrounding communities for personal growth experiences of a reputable nature, the need for extending and augmenting the basic interpersonal communication class, the need for an approach that combines power experiential and affective learning with cognitive learning. We proposed that the best design for accomplishing the task of meeting these needs would make use of a laboratory approach, with communication skills building groups that address personal growth needs, and which are facilitated by students taught in an extensive group leadership class with rigorous controls. We used as a model the program at Golden West College, and set about describing various portions of the model. We examined the primary ethical concerns and described the safeguards we have built into the program at Golden West College. We offer it as a model for others to build upon. Lastly, we briefly touched upon research, and the need for its continuance. We find that the model we are working with incorporates many of the best features of leadership training from a variety of approaches, and offers such safeguards as to make the program acceptable and effective at the community college level. We make no claims to compete with graduate

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[57] Carl R. Rogers, "The Process Of The Basic Encounter Group," in Small Group Communication: A Reader, eds. Robert S. Cathcart and Larry Samovar (Dubuque, Io.: Wm. C. Brown Company, Publishers, 1974), pp. 166-168, and Michael Burgoon, Judee K. Heston and James McCroskey, Small Group Communication: A Functional Approach (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1974), p. 89.

programs covering this subject matter. We know of some graduate programs that are broader in the scope of what they teach students, and of course students come to such programs with a better theoretical background, or at least more extensive, than that which our students bring to our program. Typically, graduate classes have a far more extensive reading list than we provide our students. And yet, and rightly so, our program has more, and more rigorous, safeguards than some graduate programs we have seen.

For the future, we are considering moving to an ambitious schedule of offering two sets of six-week groups during each semester. One set would begin around the second week of the semester, utilizing some facilitators returning from the previous semester for more practice, and ending in the eighth week or thereabout. The second set would be offered as presently scheduled. The addition of this early session of groups would necessitate in all probability dropping the training groups; in that case, we would have students in the leadership class join the new session of Explorations groups along with community members (in this way their exposure to group would be more real). We plan to expand our research efforts, and hope to publish reports of our finding during the next year. We plan to offer a more intense approach to continued study to those facilitators from previous semesters who return to lead another group; we will meet with them in weekly study seminars, and in this way we will probably increase the knowledge of some future instructional aides, as well as serving these students where they are now.

While we have an ambitious program and ambitious plans we do want to make it clear that we have grown slowly over seven years to where we are now. We began much smaller and built. The benefits of such a program exceed the efforts in building it, and keeping the ethical concerns as a top priority, we would not hesitate to build such a program at other two-year institutions of higher learning.

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[58] Burgoon, Heston and McCroskey, p. 89.

[59] Lieberman, Yalom and Miles, p. 194.

[60] For these tests we are using the HIM-B, though we will be looking into possible use of the HIM-G in the future.

[61] See Appendix for two such reports.

APPENDIX

A Collection of Relevant Papers

Profile on Group Leadership (Speech 210) and Explorations In Communication (Communication 804)

Golden West College began offering small interpersonal communication groups in 1970 to meet the need that existed at that time for students, faculty, community members and students to share their perceptions of each other. The program was called Explorations in Communication and was initiated by a group of counselors, teachers and administrators. Dr. Marilyn Bates of California State University, Fullerton, served as a consultant to the group of initiators and gave the groups form in consultation with the local group. The first groups were co-lead by a student and an instructor team. There was very little training, and the groups focused mainly on topical concerns and rapping.

The very next year, a formal training program was instituted: a two-unit class taught by Donna Willoughby. The following year the class was taught by Jon Smedley. The substantial change during this period was to move from co-leadership teams to a single facilitator, a student. Teachers were not numerous enough in number who were willing to sacrifice their free time to lead a group; further, while teachers may be trained to "teach," it was realized that that did not make all teachers good facilitators, and very few teachers were willing to go through training.

In Fall, 1972, the speech department was given the go-ahead to co-teacher the class, and a second teacher was assigned. Jon Smedley and Sheldon Nyman were the co-teaching team for the next three years. During this period, many safeguards were added and the program was built in response to student demands. Co-leading was reinstituted to parallel the model provided by the teachers and give the group facilitators greater depth and support. Smedley had done one workshop with great success on a weekend, and now Nyman joined him in this, and in response to student demand a second and third weekend workshop were added. Nyman pushed to move the class first to three units, then to five units. In 1974, the program was granted $12,000 by the district administration at the urging of the college administration (it should be noted that both deans have been members of groups, as have other administrators and teachers). With this money, the Explorations program moved into a refurbished house trailer with an office and two comfortable meeting rooms. Two-way mirrors were installed,

and videotape equipment was purchased and taping of group meetings was instituted, also, the first student assistant was hired.

Smedley left the program in 1975 to teach other courses, and Bill Irvin replaced him. Nyman introduced the use of the first instructional aide; one in the first semester, two in the second, four in the third. Nyman, Irvin and the four instructional aides began working as a team. The student assistant was a marginal part of the team. Nyman and Irvin refined and added to the course content.

A rotation of teachers was agreed to in 1976, and Nyman left the program for a year. Smedley and Irvin worked together, then Smedley and Connie Jensen. Smedley introduced the idea of the training groups in the first part of the semester to give students more of an experiential base. Also in this period, two more instructional aides were added to bring the total to six. While out of the program, Nyman wrote a proposal, and it was approved, to add a classified, three-quarter time course assistant to the program. An assistant was hired, however the person was not integrated into the senior team and quit after one year.

In 1977, Nyman returned to the program to take co-directorship with Connie Jensen. A new course assistant was hired, and has been successfully drawn into the senior team as an active member. In this year, Nyman brought a number of ideas to fruition: the first mass orientations with cognitive and affective material for group members; use of FIRO-B and FIRO-F to add to the tests Nyman created computer programs for in 1974 (these tests are used in pre- and post-testing group leadership students); expanding the six-videotapes program he had created with Smedley in 1975 to nine videotapes. During the early part of 1977, Nyman attended workshops with Will Schutz and John Keltner and was greatly influenced by their work. He has, as a result, introduced process observation in groups, and begun doing more work with nonverbal communication and microlabs.

Since 1970, approximately 2,200 people have been through Explorations in Communication groups as members; about 5,500 have applied for membership (plans are in the works to offer two sessions of groups per semester; groups have this year been reduced from nine meetings to six meetings, but are expected to get off to a much faster start due to the orientation and use of process observers. Since 1970 approximately 250 students have been trained as facilitators in this program. Demand for the program is very high, and those students who train to be on a facilitation team are very committed to intensive preparation; most have been previous group members.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF CONDITIONS

1. Participation in an Explorations in Communication group is voluntary.

2. These groups are for the purpose of exploring communication between individuals through sharing reactions. Appropriate goals include heightened self-awareness, understanding of others, seeking reactions of how people see and feel about each other. The groups are <u>not</u> for therapy and are <u>not</u> a substitute for therapy!

3. Group members will stand a better chance of benefiting if they genuinely want to increase their knowledge of their interpersonal communication patterns.

4. In the course of these groups in which members may strive for direct, honest communication, some people may experience varying degrees of stress. If you believe you will not be able to use stress situations constructively, you are advised not to register.

5. If you are currently undergoing psychotherapy or therapeutic counseling, you may find it beneficial to check with your therapist or counselor before enrolling in an Explorations in Communication group.

I have read the Brochure on the program and the Group Contract, and this Acknowledgment of Conditions, and I have received an orientation to the Explorations in Communication groups. I am voluntarily registering for this program and have read the conditions above.

_____ _____

Signature Date

_____

Report On Six Month Follow-Up Survey On
Members of Explorations in Communication Groups

One hundred and one evaluations were sent to the members of the Spring, 1975 groups and 43 responses were received. In this sample there were 31 students, 11 community members, and 1 faculty member. Thirty (30) listed no previous Exploration group experience, 2 said they had one group before, 6 had two groups and 2 said they had been in more than three groups.

People listed the following reasons for which they joined group:

38...to increase self-understanding
34...to gain insight into others
33...to learn how to communicate more effectively
32...to get a better idea of how I am seen by others
22...to meet and get to know other people
21...to earn extra credit for class
15...to have a group experience
14...to share ideas with others
1...wanted fun without the responsibilities
1...wanted safe place to communicate personal problems

Overall, 21 felt the needs they joined group for were satisfied, 7 didn't, and 16 were undecided.

Members were asked to rate the extent each objective was achieved according to the following scale: 1-no significant achievement, 2-some significant achievement, or 3-very significant achievement. The results were:

1	2	3	
6	26	11	*gained insight into myself*
4	26	12	*gained insight into others*
12	17	12	*learned to communicate more effectively*
10	19	12	*learned about the group process*
12	16	7	*formed new friendships*
13	17	17	*feel more comfortable communicating with others*
10	15	13	*feel more confident and self-accepting*

Members indicated the following ways group may have been better:

26...more interaction at the personal level
23...more time per session
12...less structure
9...more variety in backgrounds of members
9...more direct leadership
7...less direct leadership
7...more sessions per week
4...more structure
3...more balanced leadership
3...greater age variety
2...not to allow any therapy-level or advice-giving on the part of the leaders

When asked about the leaders' competency and direction, the typical comments were favorable. Thirty-nine (39) thought the facilitators were competent opposed to the 7 who thought they weren't. The ones who thought they had good leaders commented:

...were friendly and aggressive
...they worked smoothly together and made others at ease
...warm and understanding
...honest and relaxed
...assertive, but never hostile

Those dissatisfied with their facilitators felt they shouldn't be expected to participate in the group activities. They felt communication was stopped when the leaders would intervene. The few who felt their leaders weren't capable commented:

...resented advice giving
...thought leaders were false people, acting out something
...inexperienced, unaware facilitators
...wasn't professional enough
...seemed to be going by a textbook
...one was overbearing and the other was subservient (co-facilitators)
...sometimes good, sometimes rotten
..."I would shut my mouth in fear of being corrected"

The majority found the trailer to be comfortable and conducive to relaxed interaction. Thirty (30) liked the setting while 7 didn't; they wanted a larger room. Several commented on the outside noise (lawn mower, tractors, etc.) being a distraction. One felt the lights were too bright and another felt the two-way mirror was very distracting and video-tapes should not be made (overwhelmingly video-taping was accepted by members without comment).

Thirty-seven (37) said they experienced personal growth--learned to listen to others and learned a lot about themselves. The other 6 didn't--to one it was just another assignment (extra credit project for a class).

Thirty-two (32) felt they had a beneficial, long-lasting effect from being in a group. The most common comments concerned feeling more comfortable communicating with others and having more concern for others. Eight (8) said they experienced no effect.

Twelve (12) felt there was no difference in the way they communicated as a result of the group, but 29 felt there was. The main areas of change commented upon were:

5...take responsibility, make "I" statements
4...more open, less inhibited
3...more confident
3...more aware of others' feelings
1...am able to express negative feelings

Of the 43, 12 would take another group, 22 wouldn't and 9 were undecided. Twenty-six (26) would encourage friends to join a group and 17 stated they wouldn't.

Many would not comment on the questions, yet some went on to write pages on how the group had benefited them. Some letters were quite personal, almost all favorable, and many emotionally strong.

The Explorations in Communication program directors (Sheldon Nyman and Bill Irvin) are examining comments on how to improve the groups, discussing and initiating changes. Facilitators are being made aware of the results of this survey, and training will aim at greater emphasis of interaction on a personal and interpersonal level (as contrasted with a topical level). Experimentation with some three-hour groups has already begun (groups have been two hours). Further emphasis will be given to group meetings with an unplanned agenda, in response to requests for less structure (this hardly means an absence of leadership of a "non-directive" nature). More variety in the backgrounds of members will come, it is hoped, with the inclusion of greater percentages of community members.

From the comments, I feel most ex-members considered group a beneficial experience. Mainly, people felt uncomfortable when they thought they were expected to participate in the activities. They didn't like being "corrected" when they were talking. Some felt they weren't informed of the guidelines the leaders were going by. Over half who responded wanted longer sessions so this is an area to be considered. Those who liked group really liked it, and those who didn't had strong comments on the negative side.

Respectfully submitted,

Janice Anton, Student Assistant
Explorations in Communication

Results of this survey remain substantially unchanged from a survey of these same ex-members taken immediately following their last group meeting. Notable exceptions are: a greater percentage of respondents felt on the follow-up survey that they had gained insight to others, and a smaller percentage felt they had formed new friendships. We speculate that many "friendships" do not survive beyond the environment of the group, where people find a commonality in working on communicating (as distinct from the "coffee talk" socializing common in many casual friendships). As for the felt increase in insight to others, we speculate that many realizations begin in group and continue beyond the life of the group itself, and perhaps take on greater value later.

It is interesting to us that apparently there is no great "halo" effect represented in the evaluations completed by group members at the end of the group. We expected that the results of the survey taken immediately following the group experience would be more positive than the results of the follow-up. This is not the case; we'd like to think the apparent honesty of the first survey reflects the devotion to honest communication that the groups work to achieve.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheldon Nyman and Bill Irvin
Communications Division

6-8-73
Ed Carrigan
Counselor
Communications Division

Explorations in Communication

Evaluation Survey

I. Introduction

Explorations in Communication groups have been offered at Golden West since the spring of 1970. Although the administration, direction, and leadership-training aspects of the program have undergone considerable evolution, the purposes and composition of the groups remain the same--improved communication between students, faculty, administration, staff and community. To date, approximately one thousand persons have participated in the program.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this study was to obtain some measure of effectiveness, as perceived by participants, that the groups have had in attaining their objectives.

III.

A questionnaire (see attached) was designed and given to a random sampling of groups at the last session of the current series. Four Group III's and three Group II's were thus sampled. A total of 58 anonymously completed questionnaires were obtained, 35 from the Group III's and 23 from the Group II's. Group III's emphasize communication at the interpersonal level where focus is on the individual; Group II's emphasize the exploration and development of communication from the perspective of the individual's role behavior, e.g., student, father, etc.

IV. Results

A. Previous experience in the program

The number of Exploration Groups in which respondents had participated, including the current group is indicated below.

	Group II (N = 35)	Group III (N = 23)
one	66%	83%
two	18%	3%
three	10%	8%
more than three	6%	6%

B. Participant Objectives

Percentage of respondents joining the group for various reasons (objectives):

Group II	Group III	
39	51	To meet and get to know other people
39	54	To have a "group" experience
61	63	To earn extra credit for a class
65	45	To learn how to communicate more effectively
43	34	To share ideas with others
61	74	To get a better idea of how I am seen by others
52	57	To increase self-understanding
4	9	Other

C. Participant Outcomes

Using the following rating scale, each respondent rated the extent to which possible outcomes were achieved:

1. No significant achievement
2. Some significant achievement
3. Very significant achievement

The mean rating for each outcome is given below:

Group II	Group III	
2.3	2.3	Gained insight into myself
2.2	2.2	Gained insight into others
2.2	2.0	Learned to communicate more effectively
2.3	2.2	Learned about the group process
2.4	1.8	Learned more about, and/or enjoyed talking about, various issues
2.3	1.9	Learned more about the group process
2.2	2.3	Formed some new friendships
1.7	1.9	Have a stronger sense of "belonging" at GWC
2.3	2.3	Feel more comfortable about communicating with people
2.5	2.2	Feel more self-confident and self-accepting

D. Suggestions for improvement

Percentage of respondents checking various suggestions for improvement:

Group II	Group III	
17	11	More direct leadership by the co-leaders
8	0	Less direct leadership by the co-leaders
17	9	More topic or issue centered
13	9	Less topic or issue centered
43	27	More time per session
26	27	More session per week
48	49	More interaction at the personal level
4	0	Less interaction at the personal level
39	6	Better balance of sexes
17	24	More faculty members in the group
13	6	Other

E. General overall rating

General ratings of their current group experience was given as follows:

Percent of respondents		Rating
Group II	Group III	
70	69	Very positive
17	29	Somewhat positive
13	2	Neutral
0	0	Somewhat negative
0	0	Very negative

F. Comments

The questionnaire provided a space for any open-ended comments. Typical comments are quoted below:

Group II

"Group progressed nicely throughout semester--handicapped by attention and poor attendance. Leaders were genuine and perhaps felt the need to rely on structure a bit forcefully, at times, but functioned well in their roles." [Faculty members].

"Am now eager to take more communication courses."

"The group has given me direction and insight...the skills of responsibility for my feelings and honesty in feedback."

"I am a leader and feel extremely involved with group. Support and understand at a level I've never achieved elsewhere."

"...the most positive group experience I've ever had...I've come away feeling stronger and more self-confident."

"...helpful, beneficial and enjoying."

"I enjoyed this group and would like to get in another group next semester."

"I hope classes of this nature continue."

"I hate to see it end."

Group III

"...a great experience. I've learned about life, people, feelings, thoughts and interaction."

"Great!"

"Enjoyed this experience and plan to participate in another type group."

"one of the best experiences I've had this semester."

"A very successful venture in my life."

"I was not as open as I thought. The group did not really get to know me. My responsibility."

"A super experience...The leader sharing her ideas and feelings encouraged others in the group, me especially, to do the same."

"I am extremely excited about this program."

"I would have like the opportunity to keep the group going."

"I feel I got out of the group about what I put into it. I lacked a lot of motivation..."

"Include more faculty and community members."

"Far out. For a while I was skeptical about the benefits of just sitting around pooling our 'feelings'."

"Our leader did a tremendous job. I also learned to take more responsibility for what I say."

V. Summary and Conclusions

1. For the vast majority of respondents, this was their first Explorations group experience.

2. Expressed reasons for joining the group most often included, for Group II respondents, the objectives of learning how to communicate more effectively, obtaining feedback about how one is perceived by others, and earning extra credit for a class. Similarly, participants in Group III's most frequently mentioned the objectives of obtaining feedback about how one is perceived by others, extra credit, and self-understanding, in that order. Compared to Group II members, the Group III members were more interested in meeting and getting to know other people and having a "group" experience, and less interested in sharing ideas. This possibly indicates that people who complete a Group III experience are more willing to risk the sharing of the personal self. This would tend to validate the continued offering of differing kinds of groups.

3. Mean scores of rated outcomes indicated that participants perceived they had made significant achievements. For Group II members, the most significant achievement was in the direction of feeling more self-confident and self-accepting, but all other outcomes were rated close behind. Achieving a stronger sense of "belonging" at GWC was rated lowest, but even here significant achievement was perceived. Group III participants rated their highest achievements in forming new friendships and feeling

more comfortable about communicating with people. As could be expected their rated achievement was lowest in the area of learning and talking about issues, in contrast to Group II participants which rated this outcome near the top. Apparently then, their is a great deal of overlap between the perceived achievements of the two types of groups, yet discernable differences do exist in the expected direction.

In general, the mean ratings indicate that the groups are functioning very successfully in terms of perceived outcomes.

4. With regard to suggestions for improvement, almost half of the participants of each group suggested more interaction at the personal level. The Group II's also strongly suggested more time per session, and a better balance of sexes. Group III participants suggested, less strongly, more time per session, more sessions per week, and more involvement of faculty. In essence, the major suggestions here implied that both types of groups want more intimacy, as Eric Berne would say, being a basic human need and very difficult to achieve in our society.

5. Overall ratings of their group experience was exceptionally positive. There were no negative ratings, and only a small percentage of neutral ratings. About 70 percent of each group evaluated their experience with the highest possible rating. General open-ended comments tended, by-in-large, to expand upon positive reactions to the group experience.

6. It must be emphasized that any findings or conclusions drawn from this study must be taken as tentative. Questionnaires eliciting perceived responses are subject to several uncontrolled variables which tend to limit validity and reliability. In this study one must also consider the operation of the "halo" effect, and the fact that those 10 to 40 percent who dropped out of their groups before the last session were not surveyed, and their responses may have been different from these reported here.